

# So, You Need to Measure Behavior Change?

## *Progress in the Food Stamp Nutrition Evaluation Project*



Eileen S. Stommes  
Joanne F. Guthrie  
Economic Research Service  
USDA



Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program  
*Research for a Healthy, Well-Nourished America*



# ERS Role in Food Stamp Nutrition Education Evaluation

## **Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP)**

- Initiated in 1998
- Intramural and extramural research
- Congressional appropriation for extramural studies and evaluations of food assistance programs
- Since 1999 funds shared with FNS
- Current funding level \$5 million



# Where We've Been: FSNE Evaluation Activities To Date



Journal of Nutrition  
Education Supplement

Evaluation of Nutrition  
Education With Low-  
Income Families

*Articles also online at [www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov)*



# Development of Collaborative Partnerships

- **Interagency Working Group on FSNE Evaluation - FNS, CSREES, ERS**
- **Grant to Society for Nutrition Education for Post-Conference Workshop in July, 2003**
- **Continuous collaboration during all phases of measure development**



# January 2003 FSNE Workshop

- **Small group format, bringing in representatives of Interagency Task Force, SNE, other members of Federal and State agencies and the Research community. Its charge:**

**Identifying Research Needs to Support  
Program Evaluation**



# Results of January FSNE Workshop

- **Further Defining Outcomes**
- **Developing Information Systems to Support Research and Evaluation**
- **Developing Meaningful Process Measures**
- **Devising Strategies for Improving Collaborative Efforts in Research and Evaluation**
- **Maintaining Ongoing Dialog and Evaluation Research Process**



# July 2003 FSNE Workshop

- **Outcome Measures for Nutrition Education with Low-Income Audiences**
- **Automated Web-based Data Collection Systems**
- **How Program Reporting Systems Can Support Evaluation**
- **Linking Process Strategies and Outcomes**





# July 2003 Workshop Follow Up

- Commissioned review of available measures of dietary behavior
- Mathematica developed prototype notebook of questions
- *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* papers outlining evaluation and development of dietary behavior measures (forthcoming)





# April 2004 FSNE Workshop

- Expert panel identified candidate questions for further testing from Prototype Notebook
- Participants suggested additional questions to cover gaps in existing questions or topic areas not addressed



# April 2004 Workshop Follow Up

- Candidate questions needed refinement
- Drawn from variety of instruments
- Different reference periods
- Different response categories
- Developed before the 2005 Dietary Guidelines



# Development of a Cognitive Testing Protocol

- FSNE workshop committee reviewed questions to implement cognitive testing
- ERS developed contract with Abt to:
  - Revise questions for cognitive testing
  - Develop protocol with standardized probes, training manual and video
  - Protocol and training materials posted on ERS Extranet



# Next Step: Development of a Short Measure of Dietary Behavior

- Contract with Mathematica just signed
- ERS and FNS jointly funding contract
- Key activities:
  - Content review of protocol
  - Cognitive testing
  - Field testing



# Short Dietary Behavior Measure

- Short set of questions consisting of:
  - Core questions
  - Modules addressing specific topics
  - Capable of administration by telephone, one-on-one, paper and pencil, electronic means
  - Question length no more than 15 minutes



# Long Term Plan for Dietary Measure

- Validate short questionnaire against established measures of dietary quality
- Work with FNS to incorporate questions into upcoming Food Stamp survey
- Validation possibilities include HEI or repeated 24-hour recalls with appropriate audience
- Final measure suitable for national, state, regional and local use in evaluation



# For Continuing Information, FSNE Webpage

- ERS-FANRP currently has a Food Stamp Program Briefing Room
- FSNE research and evaluation efforts and information now a chapter within Food Stamp Briefing Room
- Interactive data resource
- Featuring links to ERS data and other relevant Federal data sources

